

The latest developments in the region provide even more cause for alarm. Kyrgyz authorities have just brought new charges against opposition leader Felix Kulov, who is already serving a seven-year jail sentence. Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Imanaliev told me on a recent visit to Washington he thought Kulov would be freed—the Minister must have misread President Akaev's intentions.

Truly appalling is the situation in Uzbekistan, where literally thousands of people have been arrested, allegedly for belonging to radical Islamic groups or for involvement in terrorist activity. According to international human rights organizations, police planting of evidence is routine, as is torture in detention and in prison. I was horrified to learn of the death—or should I say the murder—of human rights activist Shovrug Ruzimuradov. After being detained on June 15, he was held incommunicado by the Ministry of Internal Affairs until July 7, when his severely bruised, lifeless body was delivered to his family, including seven children. Some internal organs had been removed, probably to conceal internal lesions from the torture. But that did not stop the Uzbek authorities from claiming he had committed suicide. The ensuing international uproar surrounding this case has apparently forced even the Uzbek authorities to take heed and change tactics. Former Ambassador to Washington, Sadyk Safaev, now Uzbekistan's First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, said last week that those who killed Mr. Ruzimuradov would be held legally accountable.

Maybe in this case, some policemen will actually be charged. But even more important, this pattern of brutality must stop. At the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Paris earlier this month, I introduced an anti-torture resolution which calls on participating States to exclude in courts of law or legal proceedings evidence obtained through the use of torture, or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. It also calls for a complete ban, in law and in practice, on incommunicado detention.

In Kazakhstan, the nexus between corruption and control of the media has come to the fore with particular force, considering the recent publication in the *New Yorker* of an article about alleged high-level malfeasance. Independent and opposition media in that country have been intimidated practically out of existence, with editors of opposition publications risking charges of "insulting the honor and dignity of the president." Kazakhstan's authorities prevented two oppositionists from traveling to Washington to testify July 18 at congressional hearings on Central Asia, a violation of the right to freedom of movement that further damaged the government's already tarnished reputation. To make matters even worse, at the July 18 hearing, Kazakhstani officials attempted to serve papers to former Prime Minister and opposition leader in exile, Akezhan Kazhegeldin, who had come to Washington for the hearing. The Deputy Chief of Mission at Kazakhstan's Embassy had to come to the Hill to explain this public relations blunder to offended Members. One can only conclude that Kazakhstan's leaders are either getting poor counsel from their expensive imagemakers or they're not clever enough to take good advice.

Words fail us when speaking about Turkmenistan, a nightmare kingdom run by a

world-class megalomaniac, Saparmurat Niyazov. He has carefully isolated his country from the outside world and proceeded to violate every human right imaginable, including freedom of conscience. Along with fellow Helsinki Commissioners Congressman PITTS and Congressman ADERHOLT, I have twice met with Turkmenistan's Ambassador, seeking to facilitate the release from prison of Shageldy Atakov, a Baptist pastor who has been in jail since 1999 on trumped-up charges. We also sent Turkmen President Niyazov a letter about this case but we have never received any response. Even the international financial institutions have had enough: the head of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)—which has a mandate to promote both economic reform and multiparty democracy—recently warned Niyazov that he faces a possible cutoff of business with the bank unless he implements economic reform and multiparty democracy within a year.

In fact, only in Tajikistan have the authorities and opposition parties come to an arrangement of sorts—but only after a military stalemate ended an armed conflict that left scores of thousands dead. Though a coalition government has been established, clashes continue and the government does not control all of the country's territory.

Mr. Speaker, the last ten years have stripped Western optimists of their illusions about the nature of Central Asian regimes. Almost nobody today will speak out on behalf of Turkmenistan's regime, despite that country's vast energy resources. Mercurial, bombastic President-for-life Niyazov has irritated Western capitals and companies too deeply, and made doing business too difficult. True, some analysts defend Uzbekistan's iron fist, claiming to see a genuine threat of Islamic fundamentalism. But even the U.S. Government and the OSCE maintain President Karimov's domestic policies have greatly exacerbated the danger posed by radicals who fill their ranks with embittered relatives of the unjustly arrested or tortured.

Most often, we hear arguments defending Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan—especially the former, which boasts huge oil supplies. Backers claim, first, that they are more democratic than their neighbors. True enough: it would be difficult to be less democratic than Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which literally do not allow opposition or dissent in any form. But more insidious is the contention that things in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are slowly getting better. This is simply not true, as anyone familiar with those countries ten and five years ago knows. In the past, political activity was far freer and a wide range of viewpoints were represented in the press, before Kazakhstan's parliament was dismissed and both presidents made clear their resolve to remain in power indefinitely, while silencing critical voices. One need only read the reports of the OSCE's Missions to these countries today, or the reports of OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, to see how the possibilities for freedom of expression have narrowed, almost to the point of disappearance in Kazakhstan. That is clearly the trend in Kyrgyzstan, where the Ministry of Justice intends to require re-registration of the media—an old, obvious ploy, with equally obvious intent.

Throughout the region, this intensified repression has evoked growing desperation and we are already witnessing the consequences:

armed insurgents of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan invaded Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000. Though they have not yet launched any major assault this year, there were reports of clashes last week and in any case, we should not expect them to go away. Impoverishment of the populace will provide new recruits, threatening to create a chronic problem. The Central Asian leaders' marriage of corruption and repression has created an explosive brew. Indeed, in Uzbekistan, in late June and early July, there were political protests remarkable events for such a tightly run police state—with important implications for future stability in that country and in the region.

Should we infer from Tajikistan's unhappy experience that only violence can bring governments and opposition in Central Asia to the bargaining table? I hope not. But ten years after independence, I see precious little evidence anywhere in the region of leaders' desire for a peaceful accommodation of interests or a willingness to allow normal politics. And as leaders become even more entrenched and wealthier, why should anyone expect matters to improve?

As delineated in H. Con. Res. 397, passed by the House last year, I urge the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and other United States officials to raise consistently with the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, our concern about serious violations of human rights and the rule of law. Central Asian leaders, like the heads of every other OSCE State, are accountable to their citizens to establish conditions for independent and opposition media to function without constraint, limitation, or fear of harassment, and to repeal criminal laws which impose prison sentences for alleged defamation of the state or public officials. The United States must continue to call upon political leaders to condemn and take effective steps to cease the systematic use of torture and other inhuman treatment by authorities against political opponents and others, and to allow the registration of independent human rights monitoring organizations. Those governments of Central Asia which are engaged in military campaigns against violent insurgents must observe international law regulating such actions, keep civilians and other noncombatants from harm, and should not to use such campaigns to justify further crackdowns on political opposition or violations of human rights commitments.

Mr. Speaker, all OSCE countries agreed, as part of the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Charter, to be accountable to our citizens and responsible to each other for our implementation of OSCE commitments, which are matters of immediate and legitimate concern to all participating States. The OSCE Council of Ministers meeting in Prague, in fact, agreed by consensus that appropriate actions—including political declarations and other political steps—should be undertaken in cases of "clear, gross and uncorrected violations of relevant [OSCE] commitments." Nine years have passed since the Prague document was signed by the OSCE countries. With the trend of clear, gross and uncorrected violations which have been described above, all participating States are obliged to respond.